REPORT OF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

GODALMING,
January 12th, 1910.

GENTLEMEN,

I beg to submit my first annual report as Medical Officer of Health to the Borough. I am pleased to be able to state that during the past year the health of the Borough has been satisfactory.

Zymotic Diseases.—But for an outbreak of scarlet fever in Farncombe during the autumn, there has been a remarkable absence of infectious disease. During the twelve months twenty-seven cases have been notified to me, viz. :—

Scarlet Fever	24
Erysipelas	2
Diphtheria	1

Of the cases of Scarlet Fever, nineteen occurred in Farncombe during the month of October and November. They were all of a mild type, and considering the difficulty of securing early diagnosis and isolation in these mild cases, it is fortunate that the epidemic did not attain larger proportions. It was found necessary to close the Girls' and Infants' Schools in St. John's Street for a fortnight, the Schools remaining open were regularly visited, and all suspicious cases kept under daily observation. I wish to record my thanks to the School Managers and to the Rector of Farncombe for the public-spirited manner in which they seconded the efforts of the Sanitary Authority to stamp out the disease. The County Medical Officer and the Senior Medical Officer to the County Education Authority paid personal visits, and investigations into the cause of the outbreak traced it back to cases which, though probably really Scarlet Fever at the time, had given rise to such slight symptoms as to be considered by the parents not worthy of medical attention. There is no doubt that the preventive measures taken throughout the Country during the last few years have to a great extent modified the virulence of Scarlet Fever, and the initial symptoms are now often far less distinctive than used formerly to be the rule. The possible complications attendant on this disease still render it a most dangerous scourge, and no efforts should be relaxed in endeavouring to limit its ravages.

During the year Scarlet Fever has been very prevalent in Surrey, and the Borough may be considered fortunate in escaping so lightly.

All our patients were treated at the Joint Isolation Hospital, most of them enjoyed their stay there, and I am glad to say that everyone has made a satisfactory recovery.

Births and Deaths.—169 births were registered in the Borough during 1909. This gives a rate of 18·26 per thousand of estimated population. This is below the average of the preceding five years by nearly 3 per thousand.

The number of deaths in the Borough itself during 1909 amounted to 62—a rate of 6·69 per thousand. To this must be added the deaths of persons belonging to Godalming which have taken place in County institutions, viz. :—Guildford Union Infirmary 17, County Hospital 3, Brookwood Asylum 3. Inclusive of these, the total death rate works out at 9·16 per thousand.

The Borough may be congratulated on the longevity of its inhabitants, for a third of the number of deaths occurring in the Borough itself were those of persons over seventy years of age. No less than sixteen (or a quarter of this number) were octogenarians, while thirteen others exceeded the span allotted by the Psalmist.

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Phthisis.—Only four deaths are registered as being due to phthisis. In this connection it may be interesting to note that the first official step towards the general notification of phthisis has been taken during the year. In future all cases of phthisis treated by the Union District Medical Officers have to be notified to the Medical Officer of Health. I hope that before long compulsory notification of *all* cases of phthisis will be instituted. This would be another step forward in the war against this most insidious and fatal of all infectious diseases.

Infantile Mortality.—Seven deaths of infants under twelve months of age took place in 1909, being at a rate per 1000 births of 41·4. This is well below the average of the past five years.

Water Supply.—The Town has had no lack of water during the past year. The quarterly analyses made by the County Analyst have shown that the water supplied by the Corporation maintains its high degree of purity. The need for a larger supply to satisfy the growing requirements of the district is being met by the extensions now being carried out in the Ockford Valley. An ample supply of excellent water has been tapped, which it is hoped will shortly be available for use. The last quarterly analysis is appended to this Report.

Milk Supply.—The cowsheds and dairies of the Borough have been regularly inspected and are in a satisfactory state. Very little of the milk sold in the Borough is imported from a distance.

Sewage.—The sewage of the Town has been efficiently dealt with. The Sewage Farm is in a satisfactory condition and the effluent has maintained its standard of purity. A new equipment of furnaces has been installed which is found to be working economically and well, and extensions of the Farm have been made to enable a large quantity of sewage to be dealt with, should occasion arise.

Nuisances.—The principal nuisance to be combated in the Borough is that of overcrowding. Systematic inspections are made by the Sanitary Inspector and myself, and several instances of overcrowding have been satisfactorily dealt with during the year. In no case was a prosecution necessary.

The sanitary condition of the dwellings within the Borough is, on the whole, good. A few minor cases of insanitary houses have been rectified during the past year.

Midwives Act.—Only one fully certificated midwife was practising in the Borough last year. During the ensuing year the second part of the Act comes into force, under which no woman will be allowed habitually to attend cases of childbirth without medical supervision, unless she has a full certificate from the Central Midwives Board. I regret that the control of the midwives in Surrey has at this juncture been taken out of the hands of the local Medical Officers of Health by the County Council.

Factory and Workshop Act, 1901.—The factories, workshops and workplaces have been regularly inspected in accordance with the provisions of this Act. I am forwarding the customary schedule to the Secretary of State.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

GERALD F. BIRD,

M.A., M.B., B.C. CANTAB., M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.,

Medical Officer of Health.

CHEMICAL ANALYSIS OF WATER, 21st JANUARY, 1910.

The results of Analysis in grains per gallon were:—

Total solid matter	19·88
Losing on ignition	3·08
Combined chlorine	1·42
Equal to common salt	2·34
Nitrogen as nitrates	0·70
Nitrites	None
Ammonia	0·0005
Albuminoid ammonia	Traces
Oxygen absorbed from permanganate (in 4 hours at 80° F.)	0·005

Hardness (in degrees):—

Temporary	8·4°
Permanent	4·7°
Total ...	13·1°

Remarks:—

This water varies but little from previous samples of the general supply. Chemical analysis shows it to be organically of exceptional purity and well fitted for a public supply.

Ed. Hinks.